

Washington, D.C. – Rep. Charlie Wilson (OH-6) tonight attended President Bush's final State of the Union address. Despite our struggling economy, a continuing war in Iraq, and the many other great challenges facing our nation, Congressman Wilson said he felt the President's speech included few new ideas for solving many of the country's most pressing problems.

"The economy is the number one issue right now," Wilson said. "We all want to hear a plan from the White House for an American economy that works for everyone. We need a real plan to lower health care costs and insure 10 million children."

Wilson was proud of the bipartisan work the President highlighted in tonight's speech. Prior to the State of the Union Address, Democrats worked in a bipartisan way in the House and with the President to fashion a bipartisan economic stimulus package that will be voted on in the House of Representatives tomorrow.

"I'm proud we have a bipartisan plan to give relief to the families who need it most," Wilson said. "I hope both parties can continue to reach across the aisle and work together to put working families first."

However, the President called for more of the same in Iraq and offered no hope for a change of direction in Iraq. 2007 was the deadliest year for U.S. troops in Iraq and the President's refusal to change direction comes even though the troop surge has failed to meet its stated objective: political reconciliation in Iraq.

To help break U.S. dependence on foreign oil the President also called for the harnessing of the power of coal, which is abundant in Ohio's Sixth District, while capturing carbon emissions.

"I am pleased the President is putting such an emphasis on clean coal technology," Wilson said. "I believe in advancing the use of coal to provide the affordable energy needed to ensure continued American prosperity and future energy independence. America possesses 250 years of domestic coal reserves and I'm confident that further development of clean coal technologies will enable coal to be utilized in an environmentally friendly way," Wilson said.

"I believe an investment by Congress in clean coal technology is an investment in the future of America," Wilson added.

The President's speech also included a belated call for reform of the earmark process.

"I'm glad he's coming around to our way of thinking," Wilson said. "We look forward to working with Republicans to continue the process of reform that Democrats started. The truth is, earmarks exploded under Republican leadership – spending was out of control. Democrats led the way in bringing transparency and accountability to earmarks. The amount of earmarks funded in the 2008 budget was half of what the Republicans funded in the last budget they passed. That's what we promised we'd do and that's what we did. That's real reform and I'm glad the President wants to join us as we continue to clean up spending in Washington," Wilson said.

The President also called for making his tax cuts permanent. However, Wilson, and other fiscally responsible Democrats believe that making permanent tax breaks for multi-millionaires three years from now is not fiscally sustainable nor a sound policy to ensure America's economic future.

Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke cautioned this month against actions that would have the effect of increasing the U.S. deficit over the long term.

"To make tax cuts permanent without paying for them is fiscally irresponsible," Wilson said. "The real way to strengthen our economy is to lower health care and energy costs, bolster the housing market, improve education for a new generation, strengthen American infrastructure and restore fiscal responsibility," Wilson said.

Democrats have already passed billions of dollars in small business tax cuts and middle-income tax cuts.

"This year, we will build on this progress, enacting appropriate tax cuts to spur economic growth and extend middle-income tax relief," Wilson concluded.

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